

1776 Betsy Ross flag to star in Des Plaines holiday parade

06/26/02

By Amy McLaughlin

The Daily Herald

The Des Plaines July Fourth parade will reflect the national attention that's been showered on the American flag after Sept. 11.

The parade through downtown, the highlight of day-long holiday events, will feature two flags - one from 2002 and the other from 1776 - as co-grand marshals. One of the flags is a Betsy Ross flag that has 13 stars in a circle. On loan from local businessman Gary Cooper, this flag was flown at Des Plaines City Hall after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The second flag is on loan from July Fourth coordinator Richard Gravesmill. It is the familiar 50-star flag that Gravesmill intends to donate to the Des Plaines Historical Society.

Both flags will be carried by Girl and Boy Scouts.

Organizers expect more than 90 groups to participate in the July Fourth parade, including representatives from various ethnic and religious groups in the city.

"It really is a nice blending of what the community is and that's what I think the parade should be anyway," said Gravesmill, a trustee for the Des Plaines Historical Society.

It will feature some old friends and several new faces, including U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, whose 9th district now includes most of Des Plaines.

Also new this year will be Red Barrels along the parade route to collect nonperishable food for the Self-Help Closet and Food Pantry of Des Plaines.

The historical society, sponsor of the event, is budgeting about \$30,000 for everything.

Much of the funding has come from donations from individuals and organizations, Gravesmill said. The \$5 parking fee at Oakton will also go to pay for Fourth of July expenses.